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RABID CAT ATTACKS MAN IN GIBSONTON

Contact:

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Tampa, Fla. – A rabies alert has been issued by the Florida Department of Health in Hillsborough County (DOH-Hillsborough), following confirmation that a brown and black tabby, domestic shorthair cat was rabid.

The cat attacked a man near Nundy Avenue in Gibsonton (zip code: 33534). The victim told DOH-Hillsborough the cat jumped out of the bushes as he was walking and grabbed onto his foot. He then shot and killed the cat.

The victim is now undergoing rabies post-exposure prophylaxis.

The rabies alert is for 60 days. The boundaries are:

- North – The Alafia River
- South – Symmes Road
- East – E. Bay Road
- West – US HWY 41

Anyone who has been bitten, scratched, or exposed to the saliva of any wild animal or an animal that is acting unusual should always report the exposure to the local health department and visit their preferred health care provider. The contact number for DOH-Hillsborough is (813) 307-8059.

Rabies is a disease of the nervous system and is fatal to warm blooded animals and humans.

People should avoid contact with any animal that lives in the wild. Some may be tempted to feed or help the animal, but it isn't worth the risk. The only definitive way to determine if an animal has rabies is a lab examination. Last year, three animals exposed ten people.

In 2018, Hillsborough County has identified nine rabid animals (six cats, two bats and one raccoon) that exposed 20 people and four domestic dogs to the disease. It's clear that there are rabid animals living throughout the county and state.

An animal with rabies could infect other wild animals or domestic animals that have not been vaccinated against rabies. All domestic animals should be vaccinated against rabies and all wildlife contact should be avoided, particularly raccoons, bats, foxes, skunks, otters, bobcats, and coyotes.

Residents and visitors are advised to take the following precautions:

- Keep rabies vaccinations up to date for all pets.
- If your pet is bitten by a wild animal, seek veterinary assistance for the animal immediately and contact the Hillsborough County Pet Resource Center at (813) 744-5660.
- **Do not** handle, feed, or unintentionally attract wild animals with open garbage cans or litter.
- **Never** adopt wild animals or bring them into your home.
- Teach children **never** to handle unfamiliar animals, wild or domestic, even if they appear friendly.
- Prevent bats from entering living quarters or occupied spaces in homes, churches, schools, and other similar areas, where they might encounter people and pets.
- Persons who have been bitten or scratched by wild or domestic animals should seek medical attention and report the injury to the Florida Department of Health in Hillsborough County at (813) 307-8059.

For further information on rabies, go to <http://www.floridahealth.gov/diseases-and-conditions/rabies/index.html> or call the Florida Department of Health in Hillsborough County at (813) 307-8000, or (813) 744-5660.

The Department works to protect, promote, and improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county, and community efforts.

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